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An
Inaugural Essay
on
Rheumatism,
submitted
To the Provost and Medical Faculty
of
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for
The degree of M. D.
by
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of
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Rheumatism.

Rheumatism is defined by Doctor Cullen, a disease produced by an external and evident cause, accompanied with pyrexia and pain of the joints, following the course of the muscles. He divides it into acute and chronic. The former known by pain and pyrexia, the latter by coldness and rigidity of the joints. Doctor Chapman thinks it would be better to divide it into tonic and atonic. The ancients were in the habit of calling all inflammatory affections of the joints arthritic, which certainly was very incorrect, as these affections were easily distinguished from each other by proper investigation. Ballonius is the first author that treated of this disease seperately, his work appeared in 1642. Before him it was treated in the same manner as gout, which disease is certainly very different from Rheumatism. The former is always of gastric origin, whilst the latter the Stomach is only secondarily affected. Gout likewise attacks the small joints, and Rheumatism the large ones, such as the shoulder,

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elbow and knee, very often it attacks the ankles and wrists. Those individuals that are liable to gout, are those that lead an indolent and luxurious life, particularly the rich, while the poor that labour and expose themselves to the vicissitudes of the weather, are the subjects of Rheumatism. This disease occurs oftener in cold than in warm climates, and in the Spring and Autumn than at any other season of the year. The cause of its frequent appearance in those seasons is, that the transitions from heat to cold are more frequent and sudden than in winter and summer; sometimes, though rarely, it makes its appearance in summer, the reason of which is the vicissitudes from heat to cold, are very sudden. Rheumatism seldom attacks young people, the usual period of its appearance is from the age of puberty to that of thirty five. Doctor Caldwell says that he has seen it in the very young, and in people far advanced in years. Doctor Chapman has seen it attack very young people, and the symptoms were the same with Hydrocephalus. This disease sometimes attacks but one part of the body, when it attacks

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more than one part, it comes on with a chill, succeeded immediately by other symptoms of pyrexia, such as a frequent, full and hard pulse; sometimes the pyrexia precedes the pain, this is not often the case says Dr. Baldwell. When no pyrexia is present the pain is confined to one joint, but when there is much pyrexia it effects many joints at the same time, mediating from one joint, abating in one, and becoming more violent in the other. The fever attending this disease has considerable exacerbation in the evening, and becomes more violent during the night, in consequence of the body being wrapped up more closely; a joint after being affected for sometime, becomes red, swelled and painful to the touch; sometimes as soon as the swelling is produced the pain is alleviated, this is not invariably the case. In the commencement the urine is high coloured without depositing any sediment, but as the disease advances, and as the pyrexia has more considerable remissions the urine then deposits a lateritious sediment, this is not critical as the disease

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Seat. The fibrous textures of the body may be defined the true seat of Rheumatism, though the tendinous structure is the part most commonly affected, very often the ligaments subservient to the joints are affected; the bursae mucosae are more liable to it, than the ligaments says Scudamore. Doctor Carmichael Smith, who wrote a dissertation on inflammation says that, that Rheumatism is an inflammation of the muscular fibres. Scudamore says that this definition is too limited if not erroneous, for if they were inflamed, there would be a considerable degree of pain and swelling in them, which is never seen, but is always to be discovered in the tendinous and bursal structure. It would sometimes appear from the deep seated pain that the patient complains of, that it was seated in the periosteum; we sometimes meet with it in the nervous structure, the nervosa ischias is a true example of it. The serous membranes are likewise attacked with Rheumatism; Scudamore says, he has seen,

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his patients to walk several miles in the day; from this he says the most beneficial results succeeded. Prophylactic treatment: When we reflect on the causes that excite this disease, and that accidental or constitutional relaxation of a part, or the whole body is the most frequent state of predisposition. It is evident that those who are subject to this disease, should avoid vicissitudes of temparature, should never suffer their systems to be relaxed by close confinement in their chambers. For nothing is better calculated to produce a relapse, than leaving a heated room, and exposing themselves to a cold or damp atmosphere; a medium should invariably be observed in the Prophylaxis, when the atmosphere is pure and dry, the patients may exercise themselves by walking or riding, the former is preferable greatly to the latter, it should not be carried so far as to debilitate the system. The body should be well protected against the

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vicissitudes of temparature, it should be closely invested with flannel, the feet should likewise be well covered and the patient should avoid getting them wet, for no part of the system affords a more convenient inlet for disease. Intemperance in eating and drinking should be avoided, as they tend greatly to debilitate the constitution, and lay the foundation for chronic rheumatism which is very difficult to manage, and proves a source of great pain and inquietude to the patient.